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Subject: Electronic Signature Policy for Preseason Incident Blanket Purchase Agreements (I-BPAs)

To: Regional Foresters

The Forest Service is implementing Preseason Incident Blanket Purchase Agreements (I-BPAs) using the Virtual Incident Procurement (VIPR) system processing electronic forms (the SF-1449 and SF-30). Under the authority provided in the Electronic Signatures in Global and National Commerce Act (ESIGN, Pub.L. 106-229, 14 Stat. 464, enacted June 30, 2000, 15 U.S.C. ch.96), and the Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR 4.500) that allows agencies to process contract actions using electronic signatures, the I-BPA process requires use of electronic signatures. The Forest Service is adopting the use of eSignatures on the preseason I-BPA forms processed through VIPR.

To protect forms data, the system utilizes the Formatta® Forms electronic signature with 128-bit encryption technology. User authentication is provided to external users (vendors) using USDA Level-2 eAuthentication and to internal users (Forest Service) using Active Directory. This solution is scaled appropriately to the business process and meets the following criteria:

- **Intent and Ceremony** – At the time users submit a form for processing that requires a signature, the system is clearly taking a defined step by authenticating the user. The system then provides the following standard language when external users trigger the signature action. “I agree by entering my eAuthorization UserID and password I as an authorized agent of the company am electronically signing this form and agree to furnish and deliver all items set forth or otherwise identified on this form or any additional sheets subject to the terms and conditions specified.” The user then selects “Yes” which triggers an eAuthentication process, records the signature and provides acknowledgement the action was complete. The system provides the following standard language when Contracting Officers trigger the signature action. “By entering my Forest Service user name and password, I verify that I am warranted by the United States of America to bind the Government to the extent of my delegated authority to the terms and conditions set forth herein and electronically sign this document.” The CO then types in their username, password, and clicks on “Sign”, which records a copy of the signed document along with audit trail information into the database.



- **Non-Repudiation** – The system authenticates internal users with Active Directory and external users with USDA Level-2 eAuthentication. When the signature action is taken, a copy of the form is digitally encrypted along with the user authentication identifier and stored on the Oracle database. The form data is recorded in the VIPR Oracle database and a date-stamped audit action is recorded in the audit trail record along with the userid of the person performing the signature action.
- **Auditability** – A copy of the forms, signatory identifiers, the data, and audit trail actions are recorded in the database. At any time after the action is complete, a copy of the unaltered form, its attachments, and proof of signature can be reproduced as an artifact of the action.

The Forest Service Acquisition Regulations (FSAR) will be revised to include this policy. If you have questions regarding this policy please contact the AQM Policy Branch (procpolicy@fs.fed.us).

/s/ Ronald E. Hooper
RONALD E. HOOPER
Director, Acquisition Management

cc: pdl wo ops aqm fessaa
pdl wo ops aqm vipr implementation team
pdl wo ops aqm directors
pdl wo spf fam regional fire directors
pdl wo ops aqm eati vipr liaisons
Mary A Szymoniak
Susan A Prentiss